Into the Void by Baskin_glory

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)
Genre: Dad Hopper is so great though, Family, Family Feels, I miss slob Hopper, New Character - Freeform, Three - Freeform
Language: English
Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Kali Prasad, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Original Female Character(s), Will Byers
Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper/Original Female Character(s), Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2017-11-23
Updated: 2017-11-26
Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:00:55
Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Chapters: 3
Words: 4,583
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

The temperatures are rising in Hawkins when El receives a warning from a familiar face: the Bad Men are coming...just not for her.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

> This is my first fic on AO3. The story's been a-brewing in my mind so I figured it'd be fun to sit down and write some of it out.

Today was the first she had felt a major shift in the weather.

It was hot. A muggy, sweltering hot. El walked around with a small hand towel, wiping her brow of any remnants of sweat droplets only to have them immediately replaced. The location of the cabin proved useful in more ways than one. The surrounding trees brought some respite from the unforgiving sun, but not much.

Hopper had left for the day. He mentioned something about purchasing a window unit in passing to cool off the home. In the meantime, El had utilized her hand towel by wrapping up ice cubes in it, interchanging its placement on her body.

She could just leave. The thought had crossed her mind more than once. Mike's home probably had window units. It was probably cool.

But she had made a promise that she wouldn't do anything reckless like that again, no matter how much she and Hopper fought. And quite honestly, they didn't fight. Not like before. Sure, there was bickering, but Hopper had developed a soft spot for the kid. Perhaps, even more so, an understanding. Asking a 12 year old to stay cooped up for over a year was bound to have a negative affect. But they found a compromise. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Will, even the Max girl—every other Saturday, they came to the cabin. Max wasn't as bad as El had originally thought her to be. In fact, it was nice to have another girl in the group. They played games and watched movies and went on their adventures in the woods. Mike would steal a quick kiss every now and again from El when no one was looking. They'd hold hands and smile at one another, sharing the world with each other in those fleeting glances, touches, and moments. When their adventures led them beyond the cabin, Mike was tasked with checking in every 30 minutes with Hopper via radio. The leash had extended, but not by

much.

Compromise.

But the in-between—sitting and waiting for those Saturdays when she got to see her friends made room for other ventures. Hopper was off playing Chief five, sometimes six, days a week. She had plenty of time to develop her own hobbies. He didn't know about her sister.

He didn't know about Kali.

El had successfully avoided the topic ever since that day back in November. On occasion, Hopper would bring up the conversation. *So you met your Mamma. Can you tell me what happened?* Or something similar of to it and El would respond with "Nothing. She sits and does nothing. My aunt was nice."

And then they'd not bring it up again for several weeks. Hopper knew she was hiding something. There was a variation of the story he had not heard yet—that variation being the truth.

El had stashed away one of Hopper's neckties she knew he wouldn't miss. Or, if he did, he never made mention of it. Perhaps he knew all along what she did during the hours he was at work.

The hum of the television grew louder, El found the station she was looking for. White noise and static. She sat before the television, eyes now covered by the necktie, and searched.

And searched.

And searched.

In the void, she heard her feet step in the small layer of water, the noise echoing throughout her mind.

"Kali? Kali, where are you?" El asked hesitantly. But there was nothing. No response. Just a dull ache of loneliness. It made her feel sick.

El refocused her energy. Where did they meet before? In person. It was a large city. Chicago. One that wasn't too far from Mamma. But

she didn't even know where that was. The nice man who drove her in the truck—he knew.

Hopper knew.

It wasn't this difficult to find her before. What had changed? El was growing anxious as the days and weeks passed, knowing that there was something amiss.

Jane. Her name reverberated throughout the void and a faint silhouette appeared.

It was her. It was Kali.

"Kali?" El shouted and ran toward her.

Stop looking for me, Jane. They'll find you. They'll find me, too.

"What? What do you mean?"

They are coming for us. They are coming for all of us. The bad men.

Kali gasped.

They are going to kill us, Jane.

"Who, Kali? Please!"

There's only five of us left. You, me, your mother—she was One. Three and Six. That's who's left. But this place is dangerous, Jane. They'll find us here.

"Where are you?"

I can't tell you. They'll find us. You have to quit searching for me. I'm safer hidden. You are, too.

"I miss you."

I know.

"Who are Three and Six?"

Our sisters. Perhaps your policeman can find them. Jane, you must not reach out to me again. Promise me.

"Until it's safe."

Until it's safe.

"Promise."

Beeping. Why was there beeping? El could hear it faintly, as if it were far away. Just enough to distract her. She turned toward the noise, trying her best to locate it. It was so familiar.

The knocking is was jarred her from the void. Two-one-three.

Hopper's knock.

Reality came flooding back. In an instant, El's connection with her sister was gone. All that remained was the white noise and static of the television. And Hopper.

"C'mon, kid, this thing's heavy!"

She didn't even get up from her position on the floor of her bedroom. Didn't move. Didn't want to. She unlocked everything on the front door and opened it as Hopper sighed in relief, dumping the oversized box on the kitchen table.

"El?" She heard him call. But the static permeated everything else. Her sister was gone and she promised not to contact her. Not until it was safe from the bad men.

Another knock, this time on her bedroom door. "El, you okay in there?"

She opened the door and looked up to him, holding the towel full of ice that was now dripping on the floor. He sensed a moroseness that wasn't there this morning. Something was...off.

"Fine." Hopper glanced behind her to the television.

"You, uh...you look for Mike?" El continued to look at him without

responding. “It’s okay, kid, I’m not mad. I just didn’t think you needed to do that anymore, you know? Now that you see him.”

The truth was bubbling up inside her waiting to spill over. She wanted to tell him everything. She wanted to tell him about Kali and Chicago and what just happened in the void. It hurt to hide things. Secrets never felt good.

He could see the pain in her eyes. This wasn’t your typical pre-teen angst. There was something she was holding back. She was heartbroken.

“Did he do something to hurt you?”

“No. Not Mike.”

“Okay…you wanna talk to me about it?”

Yes. More than anything. I have sisters. They may be hurt or worse. I can’t find them. I’m not allowed to but I need to. I need you to help me find them.

“I want to.”

“Does it have to do with Mamma?”

Her eyes glued to his and he saw the tears starting to form. She was hiding so many things that happened in her “Bitchin’ Phase” as he called it. It was killing him not knowing.

“I think maybe.”

“All right,” he leaned against the door frame. “Here’s the deal, kid. I know something happened last November besides all the weird shit with the gate. And you know I know. I can’t help you if you’re keeping secrets.”

The tears finally broke free. He wanted to wrap her in a hug and tell her everything was going to be all right. But he knew better. She’d shut down and just stand there as he rocked the pain away. No, pain wasn’t always a bad thing. Pain made you stronger.

“Talk to me, El. Please?”

“I have a sister. I have…other sisters. I think they’re in trouble.”

Well, then.

”Shit.”

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Concerned parents can make things…difficult.

Joyce was making a bargain with herself. *Five more minutes. I'll give him five more minutes.*

She was worried that Will would never be the same. The torment and agony he endured nearly seven months ago was enough to make the strongest of men break down. So during the long months since, she made bargains, compromises, with herself. He doesn't have to finish his lunch today. It may be too cold, too hot for him to go outside. He can stay in and watch TV. Going to bed at 7:30 for a boy his age…sometimes that's okay. Five more minutes.

She'll give him five more minutes to sleep.

Instead, she busied herself around the house. Jonathan had left while it was still dark out for work. He was smart, saving his earnings for college and still helping out with the bills as much as possible. She worried about him, too, though. Kids have their entire lives ahead of them to work. She didn't want her oldest to be missing out on his best years.

Worrying was what a mother did best. She suspected that would never change.

Joyce poured a cup of tepid coffee and paced the kitchen floor. She could drive Will over to Mike's today before she headed off to Melvald's for her ninth shift in a row. She may be a few minutes late, but Donald would understand. She hoped he would.

"Mom?"

Joyce jumped, spilling a bit of the coffee on the floor. Will stood before her in his pajama pants and loose t-shirt. She noticed that either the shirt had gotten bigger or her boy had gotten smaller.

"Hey, sweetie, how are ya?" Joyce grabbed a towel and moved to

clean up her coffee.

“Don’t you have to go to work soon?”

“Yes, I do. I was going to wake you up in a few minutes. You seemed really tired yesterday so I was letting you sleep in for a bit.”

“Oh.”

“Is cereal okay for breakfast?”

“Frosted Flakes?”

She smiled. “Sure, sweetie.” Will moved to the fridge to grab the milk as Joyce went to the cupboard for the bowl. She pulled a spoon out of the stack of clean dishes by the sink and reached for the cereal.

“So I was thinking that I could take you over to Mike’s today before work. I called Mrs. Wheeler and she said you can stay for dinner. Jonathan can pick you up after his shift and bring you home. Does that sound okay?”

“I guess.”

“You guess? You don’t sound too enthused about it. Weren’t you boys in the middle of a D&D campaign?” She poured his cereal for him as he took a seat in front of it.

“We finished on Sunday. I don’t know, Mom. Can’t I just stay home?”

She was worried this would happen. Leaving her son alone, vulnerable, to the horrors of this world and whatever other world that was occupying Hawkins. He was old enough, mature enough, to be on his own for a few hours. But Joyce never worried about Will’s ability to take care of himself—only what could happen to him.

This argument had happened before a few months ago. Last time, Will slammed doors and yelled. Jonathan stood by, attempting to remedy the situation but couldn’t do much to assist. Will swore he’d never speak to either of them again.

It was three days. Three very long days until Will finally mumbled an

apology.

This wasn't like him. He never yelled. He never argued. He never threw tantrums. But there was a definite split in time that created two versions of Will: before the Upside Down and after the Upside Down.

"We talked about this before, Will."

"Yeah, and look what''s happened since then. Nothing. No bad dreams, no smoke monsters, no Upside Down. Everything's fine but you still keep treating me like I'm a baby. Like I'm going to break."

"Hey, that's not fair."

"You're right, it''s not fair. To me."

She sighed, losing the will to fight her son. "You know I'm only trying to protect you."

"You couldn't before. What makes you think now is different?"

Her chest tightened. That one hurt.

Will could see the damage he just inflicted and immediately felt regret. "Sorry. I shouldn't have said that."

She knew that he needed space. A growing boy on the cusp of adolescence didn't want to be followed around and hounded all the time. And quite honestly, Joyce needed space from him, too. Maybe the constant monitoring was the explanation to his attitude.

"You can stay home," she responded flatly. "Just call and check in with me every once and a while." She moved from the kitchen to her bedroom, closing the door behind her. Will stayed at the kitchen table, regretting ever getting out of bed.

"So Kali is Eight. Terry, uh, Mamma, she's One. You're Eleven. You were most likely the last one. Kali said there's Three and Six left and that the bad men are coming for all of you?"

El nodded, her cheeks flushed and eyes swollen from tears.

They had talked through the night, El revealing every detail of her trip to Chicago. Hopper spent most of that time biting his tongue and doing everything he could not to give her a good thrashing. It was all in the past and there was a reason she kept it hidden from him. Probably because she knew how he'd react in the moment. El kept asking throughout the story if he was mad. Hopper emphatically denied being mad even though there was a storm brewing inside him. He ended up quelling his anger with half a pack of cigarettes.

"Kali said I may be able to help you find Three and Six."

"Yes."

"I don't know how."

"You have files under the floor. I saw them. I saw Mamma's file."

"That's because Mamma had police reports, news reports on her. She sued Brenner. She took a gun into a federal building and tried to find you. She shot someone. There's gonna be public records of that."

"Dr. Owens."

Hopper looked at her intently before pulling out another cigarette and lighting it.

"Those kill people."

"Yeah, kid, I know. Thanks." He inhaled and slowly exhaled the smoke. "So I set up a meeting with the doc, I somehow convince him to give me whatever files he has, even though he works for the bad men you say are after your sisters. Then I find Three and Six. And you think this will somehow work."

"You can't find them. I can. I just need the files."

"Why? Why do you need them?"

"So I know who to look for."

Hopper abruptly stood up, making a considerable amount of noise as he did so. He took a few steps in one direction rubbing his forehead, and a few steps in another direction before pivoting and facing El.

“It’s my job to protect you, kid. Not the others. I have to take care of you. According to this Kali, they can find you in the..what is it, the void? They can find you there and I’m not going to let that happen.”

“But they’ll find me, too. Without the void.”

Hopper put out the cigarette in his ashtray and crouched down in front of her, grasping her shoulders.

“No, no they won’t. Not here, they won’t. We stay put. We don’t draw attention to ourselves. We can’t be stupid, remember? I’ve made allowances here and there with Mike and your friends, last November everything went to shit, and we can’t make ourselves any more vulnerable. Do you understand what I’m saying? I will not lose you. Especially to those bastards.”

El couldn’t help herself. This was a long night and early morning of truth telling and crying, and the tears fell freely again. Hopper wiped them away and pulled her into a hug. Pain makes you stronger, but sometimes, so does comfort.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thanks for following along on this new journey!

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

The threat becomes real for some.

Bailey Holloway snuck past the nurses station, hoping they wouldn't break out of their usual formation to speak with her. The 12 hour shift she pulled as an emergency physician was now pushing hour 14 and she needed to go home. Her feet were swelling inside her shoes and a long, hot bath was in order.

"Dr. Holloway?" Nurse Becky came around the station and followed Bailey's retreating form. She stopped just long enough for Becky to catch up with her before continuing on her way to her locker in the break room.

"Hey, Becky."

"Listen, I know it's been a hell of a day, but Dr. Morgan just called. He's stuck in traffic. Can you stick around until he gets here?"

Dr. Morgan, the bastard. There was no way he was stuck in traffic. There was no traffic at 10:53 pm on a Tuesday.

"He's on a date, isn't he?"

"Didn't say. I'd ask Richie to cover, but he did last time."

"Fair's fair, I guess."

"I'm so sorry, Bailey."

She was a sweet girl. Newly out of the RN program at the University of Tennessee, Becky tried her best to appease everyone. She was one of the few people in the world Bailey didn't hate. In fact, she was quite tolerable. She had asked Bailey out for drinks with other members of the staff numerous times but Bailey was always able to find an excuse. It was getting harder to turn her down as they worked alongside each other more.

“Not your fault, Beck. I’d really like to sit down for a minute, though. Page me over the intercom if you need me.”

“Of course. Thanks, Bailey.”

Becky left her in the break room as Bailey sat down on a small bench by the lockers. She was too tired, too angry, to even lift a hand and punch the metal door that held her belongings. Besides, she needed her hands. As doctor, they helped save lives. At least that’s what Bailey told herself: that it was her skills she acquired through numerous years of training and not her quirky side. The side she rarely visited and never talked about. The side never to be revealed.

“*Dr. Holloway, you’re needed at the nurses station, please. Dr. Holloway to the nurses station.*”

Dammit, Becky. Not even 30 seconds.

Bailey stood, her feet protesting with sharp aches she could do nothing about. At least not now. They’ll have to stay like that until she leaves.

One step at a time, Bailey made her way back down the hallway to the gathering of nurses. Most were now making their rounds but a few sat on their perches, taking their lunches or breaks.

Two men in suits turned to Bailey when they heard the click-click of her heels coming down the hall.

“Miss Holloway?” One of the Suits asked.

“That’s Doctor, but yes. I’m Bailey Holloway.”

“Dr. Holloway, my name is George Farrows. This is my partner, Jeff Nicholson. Do you mind if we ask you a few questions?”

Bailey stole a glance at Becky who was eyeing the men suspiciously. She had a very expressive face and when something bothered her, you could definitely tell. And something was very much bothering her.

“Uh, sure. Let’s talk in private. Follow me.” She led the Suits through

a pair of double doors. They were in an empty wing under construction. No prying eyes or ears would be here. “Can I ask what this is about?”

“Dr. Holloway, I’m sure you can tell that we’re not some men off the streets coming to ask you a few questions. We work for a government agency—“

“Can I see some identification?”

They oblige her, George glancing at Jeff held the slightest hint of a smile. It was unnerving. Simultaneously, they raised their badges to eye level.

“Hmm. CIA. Interesting. What exactly do you need to ask me?”

Bailey had perfected the art of bluffing. Her poker face was calm and serene. She caught herself getting ready to rub her wrist nervously but stopped before the men took notice. Inside, however, she felt like she was suffocating. Her heart rate was erratic.

Stay calm, she told herself. *Just stay calm.*

They took away their badges and placed their hands in their pockets in sync. Jefferson took a slight step forward. “Miss—excuse me, Dr. Holloway, can you tell us where you’re from?”

“I was born in Phoenix and raised in Toronto.”

“And what brought you all they way to Tennessee?”

“School. College. I was pre-med, then finished out my residency at UT. I was looking for a job outside of the university. Here we are, two years later.”

“You graduated top of your class. Why did you take a job in a small town hospital? You could have gone anywhere.”

Bailey swallowed. They were prying. They knew something. “I like the pace. City life was never for me.”

“And your parents. They still live in Toronto?”

“Uh, actually, we’re estranged. We haven’t spoken since I left for college. Probably 12 years ago.” Holy shit, Bailey, breathe.

“So no contact at all, then?”

“None. Are they in trouble?”

“No, no, no,” George also took a step forward. “We’re just trying to get some things straightened out is all.”

“Tell me, Bailey, have you ever been to Hawkins, Indiana?”

There it was.

The sweat dripping down her spine.

Her vision was splotchy but she made no move to rub her eyes.

For a split second, she wondered if she could outrun them. There was no way—not in these shoes. Not in this pain. Not with so little energy.

Her throat was so dry, but she couldn’t clear it. They would take that as a sign. The only way to get through this was to lie, lie, lie.

“You said Hawkins? I’m sorry, I’m not even sure where that would be.”

“Just south of Indianapolis.”

“Well, I probably have driven through there on my way to Indianapolis at some point. If not, then close to it.”

“Even for someone who claims to not like the big city life, huh?”

Shit. Shit, shit, shit.

“Is it a rule that if you enjoy life in the slow lane, you can never speed it up?”

George chuckled. “Fair enough, Doctor. So it’s your belief that you’ve never been to Hawkins? You’ve never met a man by the name of Dr. Martin Brenner?”

Bailey wanted to throw up. It was right there, lodged in her throat. The name she hadn't heard uttered in over 12 years. The man who did things to her. Horrible, horrible things. He violated her, body, mind, and soul, all in the name of science.

She told herself if she ever saw that man again, she would do what Terry Ives couldn't.

"No, I'm sorry. I've never heard that name before. I really do believe you have me mistaken for someone else."

"Perhaps," Jefferson responded.

"Dr. Holloway, you're needed at the nurses station, please. Dr. Holloway, to the nurses station."

"Excuse me, gentlemen. Duty calls." Bailey turned to the double doors.

"Miss Holloway?" She paused, facing the men again. George smiled. "We'll be in touch."

Bailey didn't respond. She couldn't. Instead, she pressed on through and slowly made her way to the station. She's was acutely aware of the blood rushing to her head. There was a high pitched sound ringing in her ears that she couldn't shake, as if her body was shutting down her senses due to shock.

They had found her. The evil bastards, after 12 years, had finally found her.

———

"*Mike, do you copy? It's Dustin.*" Mike was laying on the couch in his basement, looking over his Millennium Falcon model that he built when Dustin's voice came through the radio. He sighed, rolling his eyes before getting up to retrieve it.

"You're supposed to say "over" when you're done speaking. Over."

"*Yeah, okay. I'm with Lucas. Are we going to see El today*?" There was a pause as Mike waited. "*God. OVER.*"

“I was just waiting on you. Have you heard from Will or Max? Over.”

“*Max is here. Will is a no go. Mrs. Byers said that he was tired. Over.*”

Will. Something had been going on with him. After everything they had gone through together, especially since last November, Mike had hoped his friend would reach out to him. If anything, Will had grown...colder. More detached. Anytime Mike had attempted to speak with him, he was almost instantly shut down.

“Then we’ll go with out him. Meet me in 20 by Mirkwood. Over and out.”

They met at the entrance. Max was no longer riding with Lucas, but had her own bike. It was brand new with 10 speeds. She took a few minutes showing off all the bells and whistles to the gang before Lucas broke through the chatter.

“Guys, what’s going on with Will? He’s been...really weird.”

“Yeah, totally weird,” Dustin chimed in, trying to mount Max’s bike. She shoved him to the side.

“He’s been through a lot. Everyone always watching over him is probably getting annoying,” Max said, steering her bike away from Dustin. “I don’t know about you guys, but I’m out. El’s been cooped up for two weeks. You can stand around here farting and talking, but I’m gonna hang out with her.”

Max wasted no time in taking off down the windy road. The others soon joined her.

The cabin was located in a strange place. The first time the gang ventured out there solo, everyone was grateful Dustin brought his compass. Unfortunately, he broke through the trip wire Hopper had concealed on the property. It took some coaxing for El to come out of her room after hearing the loud bang that followed. Hopper all but strangled the kids for being careless.

They arrived at the cabin and Mike knocked. Two-One-Three. A few seconds passed before Hopper opened the door. He looked at the group and sighed.

“Hey kids, listen, uh…El…well, she’s having a bad day. I don’t think this is a good time.”

“But we came all this way!” Dustin exclaimed.

“Yeah. Yeah, I know. Maybe you can try again next week, huh?”

Hopper went to close the door when a shout came from inside. “No!”

El stomped out of her room and slammed her bedroom door behind her. She was now standing toe to toe with Hopper who had a look of defeat on his face. “Every other Saturday. You promised.”

“I know I did, but I was just looking out for you—”

“No. I want to see my friends.”

Hopper rubbed his hand over his face. “Okay. Fine.” He turned to Mike. “Channel 9. Every 30 minutes—”

“Check in with you. Got it.”

Hopper turned to El. “Remember what we talked about, yeah? Our deal?”

“I remember.”

El stepped outside and closed the door on Hopper behind her. She stormed out into the yard and continued walking on her own path. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Max exchanged glances before following suit. El continued to lead the way as the other struggled to keep up. After about 10 arduous minutes, she halted. Everyone stopped behind her.

“We made a deal,” she said before turning to them. “But I didn’t promise.”

Mike stepped forward. “Didn’t promise what?”

“I’m not allowed to tell you. But I didn’t promise. The Bad Men. I think they’re coming.”